



YEARS AGO

December 26, 1891

Looking Back

To take a retrospect of the past, adjust and balance accounts, is the common custom at this particular season of the year, and lest we appear singular, we will for the moment glance back over the work of *THE JOURNAL* during the past few months.

During the last half year there have been published in *THE JOURNAL* more than one thousand pages of reading matter, constituting a large volume, and containing one hundred and sixty-three contributions, in which is displayed the truly National character of *THE JOURNAL*, as may be observed in noting that thirty-three of the articles are from New York; twenty-nine from Pennsylvania; twenty-two from Illinois; fourteen from Ohio, corresponding with the ratio in population of these four most populous of the States. Twenty-two other States, including Canada and England, are well represented by contributors. Thus fairly have the pages of *THE JOURNAL* reflected the labors and thought of the medical profession of this country.

That the showing is highly creditable may go without saying. Our readers know that its character is a sufficient stimulant to inspire and bring out the very best work of the very best men in our American profession at the next meeting. Already the officers of most of the Sections have their work well in hand, while their enthusiasm is of the acute, infectious type that is certain to spread, and attack hundreds of new men.

In this issue we publish the list of members and subscribers for *THE JOURNAL*. This requires eighteen pages, and the number of names enrolled is about six thousand, as against thirteen pages of names published last year.

Here again may be noted ample evidence of the truly National representation and character of the American Medical Association.

Looking Forward

This marked increase of members of the Association in-

dicates the attainment of a degree of momentum that is destined ere long to gather into the Association every reputable practitioner of medicine in this country.

At the next meeting in Detroit there will likely be an attendance of more than three thousand delegates, representing ten times that number of members of State and local societies, besides nearly the entire profession in and around Detroit. The estimate of three thousand delegates prospectively in attendance at the next meeting is not only reasonable, but it is quite low, as that number does not represent near one-half the delegate ratio strength of the American profession. One of the good things about these jottings is a knowledge of the fact that our friends in Detroit are making their preparations on an elaborate scale. More than four thousand can be entertained and cared for as gentlemen should be on such an occasion.

For a Tardy Delivery

Sneezing favors the expulsion of the child in a case of labor, hence the use of tobacco, snuff or pepper, or other substances that will bring on the paroxysm by irritating the Schneiderian membrane, will hasten a tardy delivery.

Combinations of Medical Men

Even the worm will turn against the heel that crushes it, and even medical men are beginning to demand some just recognition. The recent attempt in Arkansas by the medical men of a small community to protect themselves from imposition by notifying each other of the individuals who made unremunerative patients is an index of the feeling which is beginning to pervade the profession, and the action of the citizens of that community in organizing to boycott these physicians for doing that which every merchant does when he becomes a subscriber to a commercial agency, shows only too clearly how like slaves the profession is regarded by a certain portion of the community.

Certainly it is true that the profession as a whole is punctiliously mindful of the dictates of humanity. So true is this that a single slip in this direction by a physician, even if his action be within the bounds of strict right and justice, at once calls for loud complaints from the laity.

The community has grown to judge us by altogether different standards from those which it employs in its judgment of others. When the physicians of Findlay, O., during an epidemic raised their fees from the modest sum of one dollar a visit to the still modest and inadequate sum of one dollar and a half a visit, the whole country was notified of their barbarity, by the inconsistent people of that town, who but a few short months before had flocked there for purposes of speculation, and who had held farms and "town" lots at enormous figures because they could, and who had not hesitated to receive such sums for their land as the "gas boom" brought on, and who took particular pains to close out their deals before the drop came. A recent attempt by the physicians of South Chicago, to form a protective association, led an attorney to announce the remarkable doctrine that physicians being licensed by the State could not withhold their services when demand for them was made.

It is this same spirit which prevents the profession as a whole from exercising that influence in the community which its knowledge, training and culture should demand. The animus which prevents legislation protecting physicians from unjust suits for alleged malpractice is largely dependent upon this same condition of affairs.

It is idle to say that the profession receives its dues. Its methods are so out of harmony with the active commercial spirit of the age that it cannot be understood. No better evidence of this is needed than the persistent misinterpretation of its motives by the daily press on matters relating to quackery. As to its *personnel*, it is relatively superior today, but does not receive the attention given the pompous doctor of "ye olden time."

To overcome the difficulties, it is necessary to secure the intelligent respect of the community. Increase of scientific knowledge cuts no figure in such a programme. Science is advancing by giant strides, but these strides can not be appreciated by those who can not understand them in detail. The means to secure respect must be such as universally command respect today; and here we must take a lesson from our commercial brethren. An able financier has said that the keynote to modern success is "combination." The immense power of the great moneyed corporations is not due solely to their financial soundness, but partly also to the great number of individuals interested in them. The success of the great "trusts" proves the value of combination. The so-called "labor element" has found the value of combination.

In Great Britain and Ireland the physicians have combined in the great British Medical Association. The weekly issue of its journal now exceeds 17,500. This combination is not as well organized as it should be, and will be in the future, nevertheless its influence is great, and its will, as expressed by its powerful journal, has during the past year secured at least two great reforms; the one was the frustration of the intention of the Government to abolish the class of factory surgeons, and the other was the practical and successful enforcement of the claims of the army surgeons to improvement in title, rank, and sick leave. It has

now undertaken the redressal of the wrongs of the Irish dispensary doctors.

The American profession has in the American Medical Association an organization which can accomplish as much for them, if they will support it. But instead of a membership of 6,000, it should have a membership of 60,000. With such a combination, the American profession would command respect, and carry conviction by its very weight. It is not to be supposed that such an organization would please everybody. Perhaps in its details it would please nobody. But in general its influence would be for the benefit of all, on broad lines.

Here is the opportunity before the profession. Will it take advantage of it?

Strychnine for Drunkenness

In consequence of the remarkable success claimed in the treatment of drunkenness with hypodermic injections of strychnine, this method of treatment was tried in the city hospital in Görlitz, Silesia, but the results were almost entirely negative.

Fetid Feet

The cause of this unpleasant ailment is to be found in the unnatural custom of wearing shoes. Nature contemplated a shoeless animal when she made man, and she so arranged the epithelium on the soles of his feet as to provide for a rapid reproduction of the layers worn off in walking. So well suited to man's necessities was this arrangement that Parkes, after discussing the merits of various foot-gear, concludes that the best shoe for soldiers is no shoe at all. But man had to improve on nature, and the way he has done it is by encasing the foot in an impermeable casing of tanned leather. This prevents the removal of the epithelium from the sole, and also prevents the escape of perspiration, which, keeping the dead epithelium moist, infallibly renders it odorous.

The reason why washing does not relieve this is that soap and water alone are insufficient to remove the epithelium. No amount of rubbing will do this; and it is doubtful if anything short of a vigorously wielded scrubbing brush will do so. But the Greeks had something better even than this. Some of our readers will remember the description given by Xenophon of the games instituted by Cyrus, before his march to the field of Cunaxa, and that among the prizes given to the victors were "golden-flesh scrapers." Not even a brush equals in efficiency the scraping with some metallic instrument, like a dull paper-cutter.

We would recommend, therefore, for fetid feet, that the sufferer should soak the feet in hot water, and scrape them well, every night, until the nuisance is abated; and to keep this up weekly thereafter, with morning ablutions of cold water with no soap, but followed by vigorous rubbing with a coarse towel. This is better than all the salicylated powders or ointment.